

Stormwater project at Port behind schedule



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Port of Astoria Operations Manager Matt McGrath points to a new pump station feeding runoff to the Port's new stormwater treatment system on Pier 3.

Project also over its original budget

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The weather has been rough on the Port of Astoria's new stormwater treatment system, now about nine months behind schedule and \$750,000 over the original budget.

Port Executive Director Jim Knight said there have been a series of delays because of heavy rains, cold temperatures and surprises found underground on Pier 3.

The state Department of Environmental Quality in 2014 required the Port to design a system to better leach out copper after sampling showed that too much of the

metal was entering the Columbia River from outfall pipes on Pier 3 and near Pier 1.

Copper can stunt the navigational skills and olfactory systems of salmon and other marine life. The Port could lose its federal stormwater permit, and its ability to conduct business, if it doesn't lessen the amount of harmful materials entering the river.

Environmental consultant Maul Foster Alongi designed a system in which much of the Port's storm runoff would be caught and pumped to a biofiltration system before being released into the river. Construction started in late summer.

A rainy mystery

"This is basically meant to be a big biofilter," Matt McGrath, the Port's operations manager, said on Pier 3 Tuesday, looking over the Port's new multimillion-dollar stormwater treatment plant.

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Port of Astoria Executive Director Jim Knight said there are issues with a berm surrounding the retention ponds delaying completion of the agency's new stormwater treatment system on Pier 3.
Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian



Kujala takes bow as Warrenton mayor

Balensifer, Newton vie for open post

By ERICK BENDEL
The Daily Astorian

WARRENTON — Before his family, friends, supporters and "Thank You" balloons, Mayor Mark Kujala struck his gavel a final time Tuesday night after serving more than a decade on the City Commission.

Earlier this month, Kujala announced he would step down to focus on his family and business. The commission will vote to appoint Kujala's successor at the next meeting in April. Commissioners Henry Balensifer and Rick Newton plan to nominate themselves.

Because the commission will have four members, a tie vote could complicate matters. Balensifer, the mayor pro tem, will remain acting mayor until the position is filled.

"That'll be interesting, to see how it shakes out,"



Erick Bengel/The Daily Astorian

Mayor Mark Kujala, center, accepts a plaque in recognition and appreciation of his service on the City Commission, flanked by Commissioners Tom Dyer, left, and Henry Balensifer.

Newton said.

Kujala, the owner of Skipanon Brand Seafood, served on the commission 12 years, five as mayor. In the 2014 election, he became the city's first elected mayor. Historically, city commissioners had appointed the mayor for a one-year term, as Kujala was in 2011, 2013 and 2014.

Kujala helped guide the city during the Great Coastal Gale of 2007. More recently, he emphasized urban renewal and economic development. He sought to certify Warrenton's levees while challenging the Federal Emergency Management Agency's plans to implement flood plain maps that may overstate Warren-

ton's flood risk and cause spikes in insurance rates.

Kujala also oversaw the community during the divisive dispute over Oregon LNG's attempts to build a liquefied natural gas pipeline and terminal on the Skipanon Peninsula. After the proposed

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Locals could partner with state on transit projects

Lawmakers are exploring regional option

By PARIS ACHEN
Capital Bureau

SALEM — A legislative committee charged with crafting a transportation package is considering a new funding model in which local governments would "go Dutch" with the state on projects of regional interest.

"The concept of the state and regions developing a whole new partnership, a whole new style of working together, to build transportation infrastructure is transformative," said Andy Shaw, regional affairs manager at Metro.

The approach would help address declines in federal

support of transportation infrastructure and state funding that has not kept pace with robust population and employment growth in the Portland metro area, Shaw said.

The proposal came out of a work group tasked with finding projects to relieve traffic congestion largely in the Portland metro area.

The group, a subset of the larger Joint Committee on Transportation Preservation and Modernization, this week recommended nearly \$1.1 billion in congestion-relieving projects in the next 10 years.

The projects are largely concentrated in Portland metro areas that bottleneck such as north Portland's Rose Quarter on Interstate 5 and the Abernethy Bridge between Oregon City and West Linn on Interstate 205.

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A whale of a problem

Wreck leaves agency pondering 'whimsical' salvage options for Hero

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
EO Media Group

BAY CENTER, Wash. — With the Hero oil spill now mostly under control, state agencies and oyster growers are trying to solve other problems that arose when the derelict Antarctic research vessel sank in early March.

There are still unresolved questions about who is responsible for the boat and the cleanup. The state's derelict vessel program is critically short on cash and the riddle of how to get a fragile, polluted, 300-ton wooden boat out of a small river is proving stubbornly hard to resolve.

Even so, oyster growers are cautiously optimistic that the spill will not cause any long-term damage.

"I think the important thing is we saw a progression each day of less and less oil and sheen," Bay Center Mariculture owner Dick Wilson said. While most of his oysters are in Willapa Bay, well away from the spill, the company has its headquarters on Bay Center Dike Road, right next to the Hero.

Wilson said he thought the state agencies have been "very responsive," and have done a good job of communicating with those affected by the spill.

"Unless something gets disturbed, which I am not capable of predicting, we just don't have much going on right now except a big hulking boat sitting in the river," Wilson said.

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Damian Mulinix/For EO Media Group

The once remarkable vessel Hero lists to the starboard side as it rests almost completely underwater near the mouth of the Palix River in Bay Center.

